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IN THE SPECIFICATION

Page 1, following the title, please insert the following:

--GROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

C<sup>1</sup>  
This application is a continuation of PCT/IT00/00230 filed June 7, 2000.

Page 1, between lines 8 and 9, insert the following sub-heading:

C<sup>2</sup>  
--BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION--

Page 4, between lines 7 and 8, insert the following:

--BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is a graph showing SMase activity found in *Streptococcus thermophilus*;

Figure 2 is a graph showing Alkaline SMase found in intestinal biopsy material;

C<sup>3</sup>  
and

Figure 3 is a graph showing an effect of *Streptococcus thermophilus* on intestinal alkaline SMase.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION